

Message Text

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: ETEL, IR

SUBJ: NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT (AKA SEEK SWITCH)

1. AS RESULT OF DOD BRIEFING PRESENTED TO THE SHAH MARCH 17, GOI HAS SENT SECDEF LETTER OF INTENT FOR FMS CASE COVERING LONG-TERM NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. IF IMPLEMENTED AS PLANNED (AND WE ARE SOME DISTANCE YET FROM SIGNED COMMERCIAL CONTRACTS), THIS PROGRAM WILL DWARF ANY OTHER SINGLE US ENDEAVOR IN IRAN. PROGRAM IS ESTIMATED TO RUN TEN YEARS, PROVIDE ALL MILITARY AND CIVILIAN COMMUNICATIONS REQUIREMENTS FOR IRAN AND TOTAL POSSIBLY \$9 BILLION IN GOI EXPENDITURES. (THIS IS OVER AND ABOVE THE \$15 BILLION INVOLVED IN THE JOINT COMMISSION PROGRAM.) MOST OF THESE FUNDS WILL BE PAID TO US FIRMS. ALTHOUGH I THINK WE SHOULD TREAT THIS INFORMATION AS PRIVILEGED FOR THE TIME BEING, I CALL IT TO YOUR ATTENTION FOR APPROPRIATE USE AT A LATER DATE WITH CRITICS OF OUR MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN. I AM CONVINCED THAT IF IT WERE NOT FOR THIS LONGSTANDING RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST, WE WOULD NOT HAVE SECURED A LARGELY CIVILIAN PROGRAM OF THIS MAGNITUDE FOR AMERICAN FIRMS AND THEIR EMPLOYEES. THIS STORY SHOULD HAVE SOME IMPACT ON THOSE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WHO ARE ALL TOO WELL AWARE OF THE PRESENT STATE OF THE AMERICAN ECONOMY.

2. AS SELECTED BY THE SHAH FROM OPTIONS PRESENTED BY DOD, THE
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PAGE 02 TEHRAN 02713 241603Z

COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAM KNOWN AS SEEK SWITCH WILL INCLUDE EXPANSION

OF MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS AND OF THE INTEGRATED NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM WHICH ALSO SERVES CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES AND PUBLIC NEEDS. IN BRIEF, THE SHAH SELECTED THE MOST COMPLETE PACKAGE OFFERED FOR IMPROVING IRANIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS. TENTATIVELY IT IS PLANNED TO UTILIZE FOUR SATELLITES, ONE OF WHICH WILL BE HELD IN RESERVE ON THE GROUND IN THE EVENT OF FAILURE BY ONE ALREADY FUNCTIONING.

3. GOI HAS SPECIFIED THAT IRANIAN PROGRAM WILL BE GUIDED BY GENERAL TOUFANIAN, VICE MINISTER OF WAR. THE TECHNICAL PROGRAM DIRECTION WILL BE ENTRUSTED TO THE IRANIAN SUPREME COMMANDERS STAFF (J-6) FOR MILITARY REQUIREMENTS AND THE MINISTRY OF PTT FOR THE CIVILIAN SECTOR. A PARALLEL OPERATION WILL BE SET UP IN DOD, WITH US AIR FORCE UNITS PROVIDING THE TECHNICAL DIRECTION. THREE AMERICAN COMPANIES WITH NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS CAPABILITIES ARE TO BE INVITED TO SEND COMPETING TEAMS TO ANALYZE SEEK SWITCH REQUIREMENTS AND TO DESIGN THE PROPOSED SYSTEM FOR MEETING THOSE NEEDS. AT&T WAS PREVIOUSLY IN TOUCH WITH THE IRANIAN GOVERNMENT, BUT A NEW ARRANGEMENT FOR THIS PROGRAM MAY BE DEVISED. WE SHALL CONTINUE TO REPORT AS DEVELOPMENTS OCCUR.
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